PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR BRANDS ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

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Original Article

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Abstract

This paper's goals are important for two reasons: first, from the perspective of businesses, to investigate the reasons for and practical applications of social media brand pages; and second, from the user's perspective, to learn how these pages might be of value. This study used a qualitative methodology for its purpose. We acquired facts through in-person interviews with 14 marketing managers about their company's involvement in social networking sites. These interviews provide preliminary evidence about the activities of enterprises, the factors that prompted their participation, and the outcomes of their efforts, among other things. In addition to providing products and services, the company also hosts contests for fans, publishes guides and how-to articles, and handles customer support issues. The key motivators are the rising profile of rivals, the mandate to save expenses, the central office's strategic direction, and the prevalence of social media. We described the major intended outcomes for businesses as communication with customers, customer relationship creation and improvement, customer engagement, product promotion and sales growth, and better-focused customer acquisition. Be cautious when drawing conclusions, given the novelty of social media research and the qualitative nature of this study. For a more in-depth understanding of the situation, it would be helpful to conduct interviews with businesses from a variety of industries as well as users of various social media platforms. This article highlights numerous possibilities for business leaders and recommends best practices for using social media. Given the proliferation of social networking sites and their incorporation into corporate advertising strategies, this study offers an initial stage in gaining insight into how corporations use these platforms.

Keywords: Customer Engagement; Customer Relationship; Creation and Improvement; Qualitative Methodology; Social Media Platforms

Introduction

The last ten years have seen the internet rapidly evolve, providing users with a plethora of new options. In addition to the more obvious uses of finding information and making global connections, social media platforms today provide a platform for sharing innermost thoughts and emotions. "A class of online apps that utilizes the conceptual and technical underpinnings of Web 2.0 to promote the generation and dissemination of user-generated content" [1]. Social seen by their meteoric rise in popularity over the past few years, social media are quickly becoming the dominant form of global media [2].

Businesses are gradually adopting commercial platforms through their advertising and brand-building strategies in response to the broad acceptance of social media [3]. However, only a minority of companies are entirely at ease with the move.

In fact, social media facilitates a more comprehensive, media-rich method of communicating with clients. Since these digital media are interactive, not only may suppliers and customers communicate and share ideas with one another, but customers themselves may do so. Business relationships may evolve to include trialogues, in which customers converse with the company and one another [4]. In online communities, companies may reach out to their present and potential clientele, fostering communities that can address problems and find answers as a group. Both the buyer and the seller's traditional roles are changing as a result of these transactions. In fact, customers actively participate in the interaction by supplying material, and they can affect the purchasing decisions of their peers through direct interactions with those peers.

Despite social media's widespread recognition as arguably the most potent platform for relationship development, there is a notable lack of information about how and why businesses are employing it [5]. Very few studies address the possible benefits of social media for businesses, despite its widespread recognition in the academic literature as a unique advertising instrument that raises the efficacy of advertising communication [6]. There doesn't appear to be a lot of research on the motivations for and effects of businesses' use of online platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to form brand awareness and generate leads through the creation of corporate entity-specific fan sites.

In light of this gap, the current study seeks to (a) examine, from the firms' perspective, the benefits users receive from using such pages and (b) provide empirical insights into the reasons, the means, and the expectations of who among corporations creates social media fan pages for their respective brands (also called fan pages).

The article's framework will be described. The first section introduces social media and virtual brand communities. The second part of this paper outlines the field research approach, followed by a discussion of the study's outcomes. It ends with a discussion of the results, including management applications, restrictions, and possible goals for the future investigation.

Literature Review

New Media, Online User-Generated Content, and Named-Brand Communities

Because of the introduction, the term "Web 2.0" has entered popular use [7]. What it currently calls "Web 2.0" is a set of "open-source, interactive, and user-controlled online applications that expand users' experiences, knowledge, and market power as active participants in economic and social activities." Since it is now simpler to generate, distribute, exchange, and edit/refine material, Web 2.0 applications foster the expansion of informal user networks, resulting in increased information sharing. Following the rise of Web 2.0, companies now have access to previously inaccessible avenues of connection with their target demographics, allowing them to learn more about their customers' needs, wants, and preferences through direct and customized interactions. The definition of Web 2.0 identifies five main categories: weblogs, friend feeds, group chats, content aggregators, and online communities [7].

Web 2.0 tools have enabled the growth of a new type of online community: brand-specific fan communities. "A specialized, non-geographically confined community is formed on a structured set of social contacts among followers of a brand" [8]. " Brand communities are groups of people who share a strong emotional connection to a particular brand and have developed their own culture around it, including a shared set of values, beliefs, symbols, and even a shared language. Several methods, such as the development of online "brand communities," can help businesses entice their clientele to get involved. Businesses achieve their objectives through a variety of online and offline activities that create value for customers, including client interaction, brand perception, information dissemination, and knowledge acquisition. Participants in these groups may perform a range of tasks, such as providing aid to one another and sharing

their thoughts and experiences with one another. Another issue is that many buyers simply read reviews online rather than actually using the goods themselves. One of the main reasons people join social networking sites, say, is to learn about other people's experiences with a product or service [9].

The term "online brand community" initially referred to a group of people who shared an interest in a particular brand, but in recent years, corporations have begun to incorporate the use of social media into their marketing and brand development strategies. Businesses have begun creating brand communities on social media sites like Facebook, which boasts over a billion monthly active users. Distributing user-created information in a wide range of settings, online and mobile-based social media platforms do so in a cost-effective and scalable manner. Applications on the internet "build on the ideological technological foundations of Web 2.0 and facilitate the creation and exchange of user-generated content". "The audience creates the content." This is in accordance with Its common practice to differentiate between social networking sites (like Facebook), professional networking sites (like LinkedIn), video sharing sites (like YouTube), photo sharing sites (like Flickr), social bookmarking sites (like Delicious and Digg), knowledge sharing sites (like Wikipedia), microblogging sites (like Twitter), blogs (like Blogger), and user forums. These social media, in general, make previously inconceivable forms of social contact between individuals and organizations practical.

Some of the major public relations firms in the world polled the Fortune 100 across Europe, the United States, Asia, and Latin America between February and July of that same year [10]. Right now, 87% of the Fortune 100 Best Businesses are active on social media. Twitter is the most widely used social media channel, with 82% of businesses using the platform. Second only to Facebook in popularity is YouTube, where 80% of businesses have a dedicated channel for employee-only content. Third place goes to Facebook, where 74% of businesses maintain a brand page, where each page attracts an average of 152,146 users, and where 6,100 people discuss the business every day.

Why Firms Use Social Media

Having a social media presence, engaging with fans, shaping their experiences, and using their opinions to boost sales are all things that companies want to do right now, according to a new study on the marketing expenses allocated to social media. There are several factors contributing to this cultural trend towards social media.

- Lower overall response rates. Online advertising techniques that have been around for a while, such as banners and email newsletters, are becoming less effective as consumers tune them out owing to boredom and spam.

- The advancement of technology. The growing number of internet users, innovative new technologies, and expanding online community all contribute to the rising allure of social media.

- Population changes. Most people, especially the younger generations, no longer use print or broadcast television.

- Client preferences and requirements. Trust in institutions, such as large corporations, is low, whereas trust in peers and other internet users is high.

- The price is quite reasonable. A viral marketing campaign has the potential to attract and retain a lot more customers than a traditional television advertisement.

Considering these changes and the vast marketing potential of social media, the greatest challenge now facing marketing managers is learning how to maximize social media and determining how social media may contribute to and support marketing objectives and plans.

In the earliest studies of online communities, researchers investigated the potential interest of corporations in social media. He suggests in his article "Why People Love Online Brand Communities" that two factors, word-of-mouth and market research, have contributed to the rapid growth of online brand communities [11]. Furthermore, the widespread availability of online media has helped to spread E-WOM. The online buzz quickly spreads around the world. We also feature websites such as social networking sites, online communities, and discussion boards. The most effective E-

WOM programs give consumers the freedom to produce and disseminate brand-related content within their own social networks. Second, because of the rise of social media, academics may now interact directly with customers to better understand their wants, needs, and motivations.

The following is a synopsis of the proposals made in subsequent studies of the causes, effects, and goals of social media use.

- Relationships between brands and their consumers can flourish. The advent of social media has strengthened firm-customer and customer-firm contacts, evolving new variants on classic alternatives, broadening businesses' scope of action and enhancing their capacity for interaction and dialogue with customers. These exchanges' proximity, intensity, velocity, and very nature have all undergone significant transformations [12].

- Companies can now access customers they previously couldn't. Use social media to reach a wider audience than traditional channels. Since social media users are able to easily communicate with one another and spread information, the online community has become increasingly "smaller," making it possible to quickly and easily disseminate content to a large audience [13].

- The company's expansion is just one of the many benefits that could result from more communication via social media. Increased brand recognition through social media engagement translates to more opportunities to sell a product online. Sony, for example, declared an increase in revenue of 1 million British pounds in February 2012, thanks in part to Twitter's ability to drive sales [14].

- However, because social media platforms are constantly evolving and offer numerous opportunities, businesses are constantly exploring new approaches to social media marketing and closely monitoring their competitors' use of these tools. Further study is necessary to clarify the expected outcomes and advantages [15].

- Business and education have been reluctant to adapt to the rapid changes brought about by social media. In light of these constraints, an exploratory qualitative methodology was used for this investigation. Companies that have established Facebook brand pages constitute the study's demographic. Target businesses were selected based on their total number of Facebook page likes and the kind of products they sell to ensure a representative cross-section of the economy. According to the research, in Greece, Facebook has the largest user base of any social media platform. According to research, nearly 94% of Greek businesses with a social media presence use Facebook fan pages. In February 2013, Greece had 3,971,980 Facebook users, or 35.2% of the population. It's estimated that 78.7 percent of the Greek population currently uses the internet [16].

- Fourteen of the 18 companies contacted that operate in the Greek market and have the most Facebook page likes were willing to take part in the poll. These 14 companies provide goods and services in the areas of computing, consumer electronics, telephones, mobile phones, restaurants, hotels, transportation, news, and other media. In-complexity meetings with each company's online advertising directors in charge of their social media activities have been conducted to acquire the essential data. The interviews were conducted using a guide developed specifically for this research.

Methodology

Business and education have been reluctant to adapt to the rapid changes brought about by social media. We used an exploratory qualitative methodology for this investigation, considering these constraints. Companies that have established Facebook brand pages constitute the study's demographic. We selected target businesses based on their total number of Facebook page likes and the products they sell to ensure a representative cross-section of the economy. According to the research, in Greece, Facebook has the largest user base of any social media platform. According to research, nearly 94% of Greek businesses with a social media presence use Facebook fan pages. In February 2013, Greece had 3,971,980 Facebook users, or 35.2% of the population. According to estimates, 78.7 percent of Greeks currently use the internet [16].

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There were three sections to the interview manual. The first section discussed the company's presence on various social media platforms. There was an emphasis on questions about "when" the company began using social media, "why" they began using social media, "the social networking sites they frequent, as well as the actions they take while there." In fact, the questions probed their motivations for engaging in social media and the outcomes they aimed to achieve for the brand. Finally, we included questions about the brand's perceptions of the use of its fan page and the benefits it offers to customers.

Each conversation lasted about 90 minutes. We used voice recorders to chronicle each interview, in addition to taking notes. Transcripts assisted in digitizing the tapes. We used content analysis to parse the material into meaningful groups and identify recurring topics. Throughout the study, the team kept an eye out for repetitions of previously recognized parts. Concepts from the aforementioned literary works served as additional organizing rubrics for the aforementioned discourse. There were three main stages to deciphering the data: describing the data (heavily utilizing direct quotes from respondents), analysing the data (determining key components, themes, and linkages), and interpreting the data (deciphering the meanings from the setting). We clustered the most important findings according to shared themes and expanded upon them accordingly.

Results

Influences from the Outside World That Push Businesses to Utilize Social Networks
A total of eight enterprises have reported that 2010 was the year they first appeared on any form of social media. The earliest participation dates reported by brands span from 2007 to 2011. After that, the executives detailed the specific events and motivations that prompted them to join the social media revolution. The most commonly cited causes are as follows:

- The ever-expanding use of social media. Managers unanimously agree that social media represents the most rapidly expanding online trend. Thus, in an effort to keep up with technical changes, they concluded that their brand needed to reflect these shifts.
- The second factor is the rapid increase in popularity of social media. They also mentioned social media's potential for rapid dissemination. Management in the digital world would be over the moon if word quickly spread that their product was the best thing since sliced bread.
- Third, competition arises from individuals who are already active on social media. Many interviewed managers cited a competitor's presence on a social media site as a justification for their own participation. When a competitor launches a social media presence, many people think it's a mistake when a brand doesn't follow suit.
- The corporate office adopted a social media strategy. Several managers, particularly those in multinational corporations, felt they had no choice but to implement the corporate-wide policy. If the Greek division of a global firm understood the need to keep up a social media presence, it would open a domestic page in Greek.
- Stress to cut expenses, Companies are looking for low-cost ways to promote their brands in light of the current economic climate, and social media provides that opportunity.

Brand Page Activities on Social Media
All the businesses the researchers contacted have Facebook fan pages, and nearly all of them (nine out of ten) also have Twitter and/or YouTube channels. The company also has a Foursquare page and a Flickr account, among other online profiles. While all businesses agreed that Facebook was the most used social media platform, they did not all use the same platforms.

When asked what kinds of things their firms do on social media, all of the managers said that daily communication with their users and holding contests with incentives like coupons, discounts, or even free products are the two most popular

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and significant things. Simple greetings and well wishes are commonplace in our daily interactions, as are inquiries about users' moods and plans for the day, the weekend, etc.

Eight businesses cite the launch of new products and services as their third major enterprise. When a company introduces a new product to the market, it typically includes information on the product's price, technical specs, and distribution channels.

Most of the businesses mentioned use their fan pages to offer advice and share information that is useful in everyday life. Managers have noted that this is more than simple communication; they are imparting expertise and advice to their customers on matters of daily living. Lastly, four companies stated that they didn't plan to provide customer support until their users requested it. In truth, resolving complaints was not on anyone's agenda. Nevertheless, given that social media platforms offer a direct line of communication between businesses and their customers around the clock, it's nearly impossible to avoid doing so. Several of these companies have made it a policy to answer every query and address every complaint from clients.

Possible Rewards from Social Media Brand Pages

1. Managers' responses to the question about the goals and outcomes they hoped to achieve with their company's brand pages on social media fell into six broad groups.

2. Establish, fortify, and improve ties with clients. Virtually every manager surveyed agreed that direct interaction with customers via social media increased the quality of the business's interactions with its clientele.

3. Second, social media allows businesses to interact with their customers in a natural way, much like how friends talk and listen to one another. Managers have noted that clients are vocal about their wants and needs for the business.

4. More than half of the managers questioned said that social media was a good tool for customers to learn about a firm and submit positive recommendations. The viral nature of communications exchanged among social media users allows businesses to quickly obtain widespread visibility and generate considerable buzz through contests and freebies.

5. Fourth, social media allows businesses to reach out to a larger audience while still maintaining a high degree of precision in their outreach efforts. The ability to focus on specific subsets of followers is an even bigger boon for the company.

6. Nearly half of all business managers believe that social media posts can effectively promote a wide range of marketing activities, facilitating the execution of marketing actions and encouraging the use of products. "After trial and error, it discovered that by bundling these communications with messages promoting competitions and entertainment, it may publish certain marketing-related messages without bothering our fans," it said.

7. In a survey of businesses, each one said that having more customer participation was the initiative's most important goal. The best way to interact with your followers is through your social media accounts, as stated. This new, low-cost, open channel gives businesses the chance to communicate with their devoted customers every day. Now, customers can have a discussion with their favourite brand as easily as they would with a personal friend, and the brand will respond in a matter of minutes.

Brand Page Visitors' Benefits

Competitions account for over 50% of customer activity on brand social media accounts, followed by user communication at 30% and inquiries, criticism, complaints, or appreciation for the business at 20%.

When asked what incentives motivate customers to participate on a brand's page, managers responded that social connections with other users, in addition to the obvious rewards and other monetary benefits, are the primary motivators. Even during tournaments, users converse with one another, posing questions or simply having fun with the process. After that, customers inquire about information and request prior experiences from customers who have already used or purchased a service or good. Friendships developed on Facebook through consistent communication between members

may evolve into meaningful relationships outside of the social networking site. We polled managers about the frequency of user chats related to the brand, and some reported seeing comments like "hey, add me if you want" or "I'll tell you more through private messages." It's clear from these exchanges that some consumers' social lives extend beyond the brand's fan page. This makes Facebook brand pages an excellent venue for establishing and nurturing connections between users.

Discussion

The researchers set out to better understand how companies formulate their social media strategies. This can be done by incorporating the findings into a flowchart (shown in Figure 1) that depicts the process by which the firm determines how to employ social media.

Figure 1: Schematic representation of how social media influences our choices
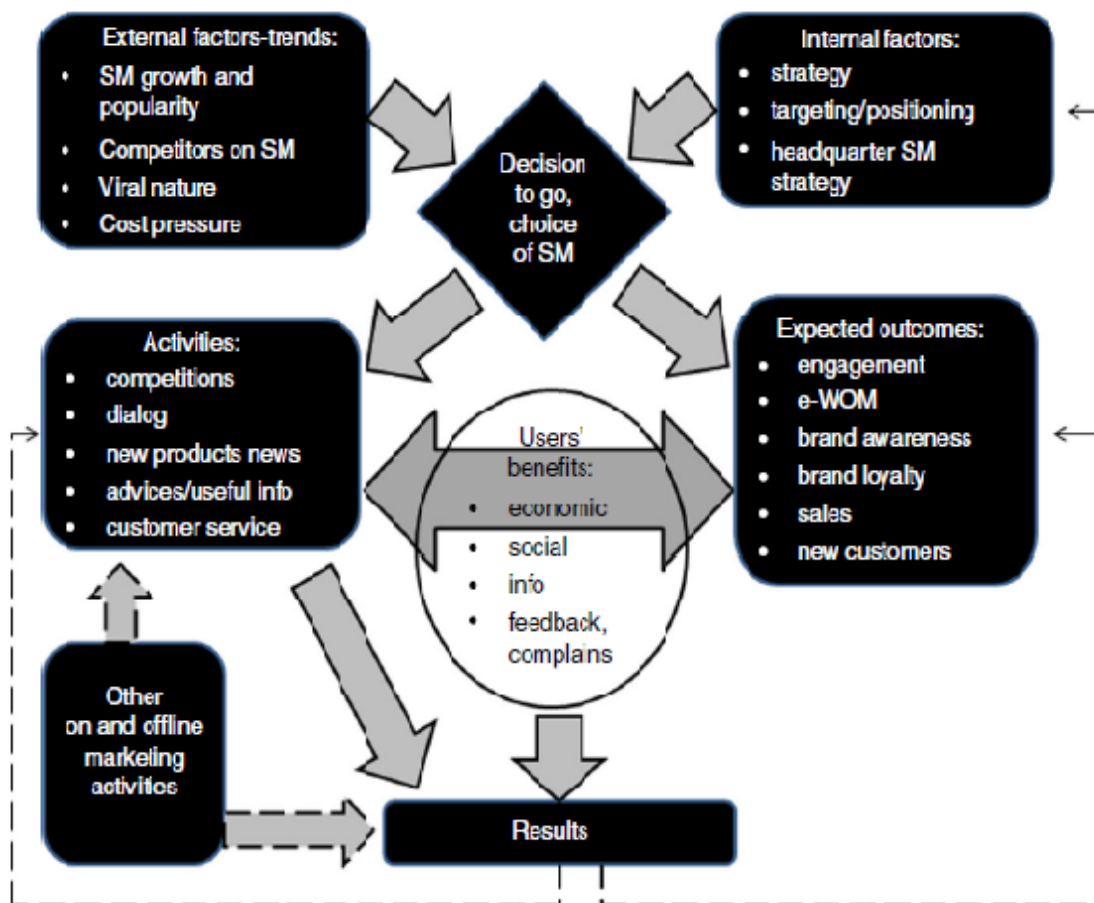
Source – Tajeddini, Martin & Ali, 2020 [17]

1. There are several internal and external reasons for a company to use social media. As mentioned above, these exogenous factors include the quick spread and popularity of social media, the viral nature of content shared on these platforms, the presence of rivals on these sites, and the low cost of the solutions offered by these sites themselves. Corporate strategy, positioning, and targeting are all internal components; the latter provides the broad framework into which individual marketing activities should be inserted.

In theory, there should be a plethora of upsides to a business's participation in social media. One of the most important factors was cited as involvement from the client side. The concept of customer interaction has evolved in response to the promise of Web 2.0 technologies and capabilities to radically alter the traditional seller-customer dynamic. Social media is particularly useful for professionals who want to use it to network with others, strengthen existing ties, and

boost their businesses' bottom lines [17]. Numerous businesses realized the importance of word-of-mouth marketing and made concerted efforts to cultivate it. Every company has two main objectives: raising brand recognition and widening the scope of the most successful kind of advertising, "word of mouth." Several professionals hold the view that social media is a powerful instrument that may assist a company in reaching these objectives. The widespread use of social media facilitates and accelerates the so-called viral spread of information. In contrast to more conventional kinds of internet advertising, the processes I'm describing here act as amplifiers, combining, and building upon user suggestions with more obvious forms of content. Because the same dynamics may quickly spread anger, resentment, and disgust, businesses should approach them with caution. Businesses may boost favourable reviews, fix errors, and lessen any negative market impact by keeping an ear to the ground. Attracting new customers, increasing consumption, and up- and cross-selling are all effective ways to boost revenues.

After the overall social media performance of a company has been evaluated, a multi-level feedback system will be enabled. The organization has to think carefully before making any drastic changes to its strategy, market focus, or product positioning (referred to as "internal factors"). Lastly, after evaluating the anticipated outcomes of a social media presence, a company might modify its current social media activities or develop brand new ones.

Finally, it's important to acknowledge the difficulty of measuring the results that may be directly related to the company's social media presence, given the outlined targets of engagement, word-of-mouth, loyalty, sales, and new consumers. This complicates the already challenging task of defining suitable KPIs to evaluate the effectiveness of the SM brand's commercial endeavours.

Consequences for Managers

A manager has a great chance to turn a casual user into a fan and a devoted client by taking advantage of the frequent and direct connection that social media enables customers and potential consumers. Using the page as a direct sales channel or hosting promotions such as discounts, offers, competitions, marketing messaging, and so on can boost sales and strengthen brand loyalty.

Brand managers on social media should focus on getting their followers to spread positive messages and images. Due to the extensive opportunities for connection and interaction that social media provides, customers can have considerable sway over the members of their social networks. One person's positive brand experience may be another's negative one. Customers who have developed strong emotional relationships with a vendor may act as promoters for that vendor through their interactions with other customers and non-customers.

When asked why they use social media, several executives cited increasing brand awareness as a key objective. In light of the proliferation of social media sites, businesses should consider increasing their visibility across a wide range of platforms.

This link is a major benefit of a brand's social media presence; therefore, companies should incentivize both continuous participation (through comments and "likes") and purchasing behaviour (through discounts) from their most committed social media followers. Brands should provide their own helpful information on social media brand pages in addition to curating user-generated content in order to motivate visitors to take action. One potentially useful information-based solution is competition. To get the most out of the community in terms of building meaningful connections with like-minded people, it's important to recognize and reward those who contribute the most to the conversation on the page.

Restrictions and Future Research Implications

This study's overarching objective is to offer a first look at how brands use social media and the results they expect to see from doing so. We should interpret the results of this study with caution, given the qualitative nature of the research and the nascent state of social media studies. We should therefore address organizations from additional sectors to provide a more complete picture of enterprises' social media activity. This holds true even for well-known and established brands that maintain a robust online presence across various market sectors. To properly follow the development of businesses' tactics, a longitudinal analysis of social media practices is also necessary.

Businesses often view increased customer involvement as a positive outcome of their social media activities. In addition, the Marketing Science Institute has acknowledged it as a significant research field [18]. With more and more individuals logging on to social media every day, it's more important than ever to study consumer habits online [19]. Customer involvement is positively associated with relationship results, including satisfaction, trust, emotional commitment, and loyalty. More empirical research on the impact of engagement on brand perception and attitude would be beneficial for managers.

Currently, there is much debate concerning the potential dangers and difficulties that may result from a business's participation in social media. There is the potential for dealing with unrestrained and unpredictable behaviour on the part of brand devotees on social media, as well as the chance of having to deal with negative criticism, rumours, and word of mouth [20] and [21].

While this investigation mainly focuses on how social media can change interactions between customers and brands, it would be fascinating to expand the subject to include how social media use affects public policy and society as a whole in a future study. For instance, additional research into the benefits of social media for enhancing the citizen-public service link will illuminate the tools' potential effects on quality of life. Social media outlets would also impact how the public perceives the government and lawmakers. Barak Obama's use of Twitter during the 2008 US presidential election serves as an illustration of this. Similar to how social media increases customer engagement with businesses, it can also make people more engaged citizens and increase the openness of government decisions. Last but not least, the interactive aspects of social media platforms may lead to novel ways for people to communicate with one another, resulting in joint projects and actions that will be advantageous to society as a whole.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the world of brand promotion on social media platforms is dynamic and always changing. As was previously mentioned, using these platforms gives brands a plethora of chances to interact with their target market, raise brand recognition, and encourage conversions. Brands may create customized campaigns that connect with their target audiences by utilizing the distinct features and functionalities of each platform.

Thanks to social networking sites' versatility, firms can experiment with different promotional strategies to meet their marketing goals, from influencer collaborations to user-generated content. Additionally, these platforms' abundance of data and analytics enables brands to continuously improve their tactics, maximizing return on investment and success. Despite the immense prospects, there are also obstacles, such as shifting algorithms, getting tired of advertisements, and preserving genuineness in a crowded online environment. Brands need to prioritize real interaction above meaningless numbers, stay flexible, and pay attention to changing trends to successfully traverse these hurdles.

Ultimately, sincerity, originality, and a real connection to the audience are the keys to successful social networking site promotional techniques. Businesses may create a powerful social media presence that connects with customers and encourages steadfast loyalty by cultivating meaningful relationships, offering value, and adhering to their corporate identity. In the current digital era, firms that want to succeed in a cutthroat market must learn how to effectively promote themselves on social media platforms.

Conflict of Interest

The authors affirm that they do not have any conflicting objectives.

Acknowledgement

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